

Honoring an advocate of our military heroes and their families, Rep. Debbie Halvorson (IL-11) brought McLean County resident and President of the Corn Belt Blue Star Mothers, Sharon McCauley, to Washington, DC to watch President Obama's State of the Union address.

McCauley, who is from Bloomington, received Halvorson's only ticket. She watched the President's annual address to Congress from the gallery above the chamber on Wednesday evening.

"Sharon McCauley is a true leader in the fight to honor our military heroes and their families. She's done great work in the community to put together programs that help and encourage our servicemen, servicewomen, and their families," said Halvorson.

A life-long resident of McLean County, Illinois, McCauley has been a leader in advocating for the military, veterans and their families. McCauley's son serves as an Army Reservist, and as an employee of State Farm, headquartered in Bloomington, IL, McCauley led the charge in founding State Farm Military Affinity Group's Adopt-a-Soldier program, which connects local individuals with troops serving overseas. As Community Alliance Chair for the Adopt-a-Soldier program, over 500 troops have received care packages. McCauley also helps to run Operation Cookie Share, which is an alliance between State Farm Adopt-a-Soldier and the Central Illinois Girl Scouts. The program allows local residents to send cookies to the troops by checking off a box on their order forms.

"My son is my hero. And encouraging and supporting our troops is so important to me. One of the most touching things I've heard from a soldier serving overseas was, 'Everyone knows when the mail plane lands-it's like Christmas. It's hard to explain how you feel when you get mail from someone you don't even know. It makes you feel 10 feet tall and bulletproof to know you belong to the greatest country in the world,'" said McCauley.

"As a military mom myself, I've been so impressed by her tireless advocacy and by her great ideas and advice on issues that matter to our military, our veterans and their families. I wanted to make sure we recognize the importance of military families and honor those who work so hard to serve and encourage them," said Halvorson.

Congresswoman Halvorson is the only member of the House of Representatives from Illinois to sit on the House Veterans Affairs Committee. In her first year in office, Halvorson introduced several pieces of legislation aimed at helping military families, including *Families of Disabled Veterans Work Opportunity Act*, HR 3908, and the *Wounded Warrior Caregiver Assistance Act*

, HR 2898. More information about the Corn Belt Blue Star Mothers can be found at <http://www.cornbeltbluestarfamilies.org>

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